

(March 15, 2006) Ehlers and Holt Seeking Signatures for NSF Funding Letter

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Time is of the essence for constituents who support a 7.9% increase in the National Science Foundation's budget. Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) and Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ) have asked their colleagues to sign a letter to key House appropriators asking them to support President Bush's \$6.02 billion request for the National Science Foundation. This "Dear Colleague" letter that was sent to the House membership on March 9 will be sent to House Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Ranking Member Alan Mollohan (D-WV) in the very near future. Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC) and Dan Lipinski (D-IL) joined Holt and Ehlers in sending this letter.

The letter is intended to demonstrate Members' support for the NSF. As previously stated, "Dear Colleague" letters are more likely to be acted on if constituents express an interest. See the email links and telephone numbers at the end of <http://www.aip.org/gov/nb1.html>. The FY 2007 NSF budget request is summarized at <http://www.aip.org/fyi/2006/023.html>. Last year, 167 representatives signed a similar letter (see <http://www.aip.org/fyi/2005/066.html>.)

As of this afternoon, the following 69 representatives have agreed to sign this letter: Abercrombie (D-HI), Allen (D-ME), Baldwin (D-WI), Bartlett (R-MD), Berman (D-CA), Boehlert (R-NY), Bordallo (D-GU), Boucher (D-VA), Brady, Brown (D-OH), Capps (D-CA), Cardin (D-MD), Clay (D-MO), Conyers (D-MI), Cooper (D-TN), Costa (D-CA), Costello (D-IL), DeFazio (D-OR), Delahunt (D-MA), Dent (R-PA), Dingell (D-MI), Doyle (D-PA), Ehlers (R-MI), Engel (D-NY), English (R-PA), Eshoo (D-CA), Etheridge (D-NC), Gerlach (R-PA), Gilchrest (R-MD), Gutknecht (R-MN), Hall (R-TX), Harris (R-FL), Holt (D-NJ), Honda (D-CA), Hooley (D-OR), Inglis (R-SC), E.B. Johnson (D-TX), T. Johnson (R-IL), Kildee (D-MI), Kind (D-WI), Larson (D-CT), Leach (R-IA), Levin (D-MI), Lewis (R-CA and chairman of House Appropriations Committee), Lipinski (D-IL), Lynch (D-MA), Matsui (D-CA), McCotter (R-MI), McDermott (D-WA), McGovern (D-MA), McIntyre (D-NC), Meeks (D-NY), Michaud (D-ME), D. Moore (D-KS), G. Moore (D-WI), Nadler (D-NY), Neal (D-MA), Oberstar (D-MN), Pallone (D-NJ), Payne (D-NJ), Rangel (D-NY), Reyes (D-TX), Rogers (R-MI), Schwartz (D-PA), Schwarz (R-MI), Smith (D-WA), Snyder (D-AR), T. Udall (D-NM), Van Hollen (D-MD)

The text of this letter being circulated by Holt and Ehlers on the FY 2007 NSF budget request that will be sent to Wolf and Mollohan follows:

"Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Mollohan:

"Thank you very much for your leadership in increasing federal funding for basic science research. As supporters of scientific research and education, we respectfully ask that you make the National Science Foundation (NSF) funding a priority again and provide \$6.02 billion in your fiscal year 2007 Science, State, Justice and Commerce (SSJC) Subcommittee appropriations legislation. This is the level requested by the President's budget.

"In previous years, we have made a similar bipartisan request along with many of our colleagues, seeking increased funding for an agency that has suffered budget stagnation and even a budget cut in fiscal year 2005. This year, however, we are heartened that the budget request for the NSF includes a substantial increase for the 'high-leverage fields of physical sciences and engineering' as part of the proposed American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI). This boost in funding would allow for new innovative technologies to be developed by NSF scientists and engineers. While we lament that in previous years we fell far short of the authorized levels of funding for NSF, we believe that meeting the President's request for NSF in fiscal year 2007 represents the first year of a ten-year commitment to the doubling of the NSF budget.

"The proposed ACI focuses funding on scientific research and facilities at NSF that fuel innovation. Clearly the government plays a role in innovation, as two-thirds of U.S. patents cite federal funding as their source of support. Federally funded basic research has cultivated ground breaking technologies, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), global positioning systems (GPS), human genome mapping, lasers, fiber optics and many, many more. NSF research supports technologies that are later applied by other agencies, ranging from Doppler radar, which has saved many lives through accurate weather forecasts, to laser-guided weapons, which have revolutionized combat. Recently, NSF has pioneered cutting-edge research in cyberinfrastructure, the information technology-based infrastructure increasingly essential to science and engineering leadership in the 21st Century. As other nations are significantly increasing their funding of basic research, the U.S. must recognize that leadership in science and technology is not something we can take for granted.

"NSF is also a key supporter of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Now, more than ever, we must invest in our children's education to develop their talent, ensure their success, and maintain the quality of our workforce and economic strength. NSF, with its expertise in merit-review awards, is uniquely positioned to contribute to math and science education and directly impact our nation's competitiveness. Elementary, middle- and high-school students participating in the NSF Math and Science Partnership (MSP) program showed significant improvements in mathematics proficiency test scores, according to a first analysis of results. NSF education endeavors are complementary to those of the Department of Education, as NSF research provides the foundation for much of the applications promoted by the Department of Education. In the words of Craig Barrett, the Chairman of the Intel Corporation, 'If you look at the driving forces for today's economy, it happens to be the high-tech area. You can't be successful in those fields if you don't have a workforce that understands mathematics and science.' We strongly support the educational mission of the NSF, and request that if it is possible to devote any additional funds from other agency portions of. your allocation, they would be added to the President's request for the education directorate (EHR) of NSF.

"We recognize this significant increase is requested at a time when other agencies with the SSJC account may be suffering cuts. Please preserve funding for the NSF at the level requested by the President, and do not allow the NSF portion of the ACI to be depleted by competing interests. Though NSF receives only four percent of the total federal research and development budget, it is the bedrock of our scientific strength and provides the basis for innovation and development throughout our economy.

"We respectfully request that you fund NSF at the President's requested level of \$6.02 billion in fiscal year 2007. We cannot afford to shortchange the fundamental sciences on which our future and our children's future depend."

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